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Private tuition in India: trends and issues

K. Sujatha

Introduction

- 1 In India, like most developing countries, there exists a system of “private tuition”¹ parallel to the formal system of education to supplement academic support and to overcome school inadequacies. In recent years private tutoring emerged as major force as a result of both demand and market mechanisms. In fact, in terms of its nature, extent and importance it is comparable to the formal system or, it is like a shadow of the formal system (Bray, 1999). In other words, private tutoring acts as surrogate mother as schools became ineffective. The system of private tuition has been in existence in India for a long time but in recent times it has grown manifold affecting the very core of educational system. Though private tutoring is prevalent at all levels of education it is preponderant in secondary education mainly because performance in public examinations is an important aspect to meet increased competition for entering into desired academic streams and thereby to higher, technical, and professional education, etc.
- 2 Research studies on private tuition are few and far between, even if the phenomena of private tuition are widespread and predominant. Further, studies in the Indian context are fewer. Biswal (1999), in his paper on “Private Tutoring and Public Corruption: The Cost-Effective Education System for Developing Countries”, examines the issue of private tutoring with an assumption that teachers in developing countries are poorly paid despite their status in society and also despite the fact that up to 80% of public expenditure on education goes on their salaries. He considers that private tuition is a result of poor teaching, low monitoring at the workplace, and conscious efforts to create a market for private tutoring or coaching. This he considers a corruption in the education delivery system. In India, dependency on private tuition to improve performance was found common even at the lower levels of education (Aggarwal, 1998). In the context of school-level analysis by *Pratichi* (Sen, 2001), it was observed that a wide practice of

private tuition in primary schools reinforces the inefficiency of the education system at the primary level. The biggest sufferers of the system are children from economically and socially disadvantaged and backward classes. The study suggests a ban on private tutoring and the need for the well-off to join government schools to create pressure on schools to perform better (Sen, 2001). However, none of these studies focused on secondary education, in which a maximum number of students seek private tuition, although the issue has sometimes attracted media attention or been discussed anecdotally.

- 3 The present paper is based on empirical data collected during 2005–2006 as a part of larger research study on secondary education. The paper examines the nature, extent and trends of private tutoring in secondary education in India and also discusses reasons and some policy issues. The data with regard to private tuition was collected from a random sample of 4,031 students studying in Grade IX–X in 49 schools from Thiruvananthapuram, Pune, Nalgonda and Varanasi districts in four states: Kerala, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh respectively. The schools chosen represent rural and urban locations; exclusive girls, boys and mixed schools; different management types; and good and poor performance in public examinations. The four sampled states contrast in their socioeconomic development. The four states contrast in education and economic development as well as in their varied cultural and political context. The four states together cover around 30% of total schools and 40% of total enrolment at secondary level in India.
- 4 The next part of the paper briefly presents the nature and forms of private tuition in India and the subsequent section examines trends of private tutoring. The third section examines the intensity and source of private tuition. The final part discusses reasons for private tuition followed by some issues and policy implications.
- 5 As the activity of private tutoring finds new means and territories, classes and sites, its nature and type also change in accordance with demand, groups and locations. Private tuition can be divided broadly into three types namely: home tuition arranged by individuals or by tuition bureaus; group tuition by school teachers, or by unemployed, retired and other types of teachers; and tutorial/coaching centers run by individuals or a group of people.

Trends of private tuition

- 6 Out of the total number of students covered in the study (4,031),² 44.7% were seeking private tutoring for one or more subjects at secondary level (Grade IX–X). The extent of private tuition varies among four sampled states, ranging from 55% to 32.26%. Out of four sampled states, Kerala, an educationally progressive state, has the highest percentage of students going for private tuition at secondary level (55%), followed by Maharashtra (49.35%), which is both industrially and educationally developed. In Andhra Pradesh, the percentage of students taking private tuition is the lowest (32.26%), while Uttar Pradesh (46.67%) is just behind Maharashtra.
- 7 The extent of private tutoring is significantly higher in Grade X compared in Grade IX. The average percentage of students seeking private tuition is 58.8% as against 32% in Grade IX. Since the results of public examination in Grade X determines admission into

higher secondary as well as choice of subjects and streams, a higher percentage of students in Grade X obviously prefer to go for private tutoring compared to Grade IX.

Table 1: Students receiving tuition in different classes (%)

State No.	State	IX	X	IX-X
1	Andhra Pradesh	11.3	52.7	32.26
2	Kerala	43.0	71.58	55.0
3	Maharashtra	43.21	56.0	49.35
4	Uttar Pradesh	31.39	62.0	45.67
Total		32.0	58.8	44.57

$$N = (IX-X) = 4,031$$

- 8 Among the four sampled states, in Kerala a high majority of students seek private tuition (71.58%) in Grade X; the lowest percentage is found in Andhra Pradesh (52.7%). Interestingly, Uttar Pradesh shows a lower level of propensity towards private tuition compared to Kerala and Maharashtra, but in Grade X a high majority of students attend private tutoring.
- 9 The differential trends in private tuition phenomena in sampled states can be attributed to the social, economic, educational and political characteristics of the states, even if quality of secondary education is a common issue in all the states. In Kerala, higher literacy and successful universalization of elementary education have ensured a higher base and the state also has a higher transition rate at all levels, especially at secondary level. This means higher competition for higher-secondary education, especially in quality institutions where places are limited. Slow industrialization and high unemployment among secondary graduates in the state has probably also led to high pressure at higher-secondary level. The social obsession for higher education in Kerala also makes parents put pressure on children to perform better at all levels of education providing private-tuition support. More importantly, despite success in achieving universal access and participation, the state of Kerala has serious problem in terms of quality of secondary education (Sujatha and Geeta Rani, 2006). All this culminates in private tutoring, which is considered as a panacea. Consequently, a high percentage of students rush for private tutoring. The educationally and economically backward state of Uttar Pradesh has witnessed a dramatic increase in enrolment and the proportion of private unaided schools at lower-secondary level in the last few years (Sujatha and Geeta Rani, 2006). The state has almost withdrawn from funding for the expansion of secondary education. Of late this state also is characterized by increased social obsession towards secondary education (Chopra and Jeffery, 2004). Also, since this state has a poor and fluctuating performance at public examination, it is only natural that students go for private tuition during the final year of the terminal examination.
- 10 Contrary to the other three states, in Andhra Pradesh the demand for private tuition is relatively low. This interesting trend can be explained in terms of a decline in both the

demand as well as the supply of private tuition. The declining demand has come about as the indirect effect of administrative intervention through disincentives to teachers and head teachers for poor performance in public examination at lower-secondary level. At the supply side the transformation of most private tutorial and coaching centers into private unaided schools, and keen competition among private schools to meet the demand for quality of education, has led to combining tutoring into extra coaching in the school schedule before and after school hours.

Rural-urban differences

- 11 The extent of private tutoring varies among localities. It is usually higher in urban areas than in rural areas (Bray, 1999). The present study confirms a similar pattern in India, with more students from urban areas going for private tuition than their rural counterparts. The extent of private tuition in rural areas is much lower at secondary level (29.03%) compared to urban areas (64%). A similar trend is found in all the sampled states, with the exception of Kerala, where the rural-urban difference is marginal.

Table 2: Private tuition in rural/urban areas (%)

	Secondary	
States	Rural	Urban
Andhra Pradesh	20.67	38.75
Kerala	66.53	70.6
Maharashtra	29.3	72.72
Uttar Pradesh	32.0	52.7
Total	29.03	64.0

Secondary N = Rural = 1,492; Urban = 2,539

- 12 Surprisingly, the industrially and educationally advanced state of Maharashtra showed higher rural-urban difference in the extent of private tutoring, followed by Uttar Pradesh. The state of Andhra Pradesh has the lowest proportion of private tutoring in rural areas compared to the other three states, with an 18 percentile difference. This trend clearly indicates inequity in educational inputs not only in terms of schooling facilities but also in terms of private tutoring between rural and urban areas. In other words, government policies welcome rural and disadvantaged students into the system but, with compromised quality provisions, the students lack resources to supplement learning through private tuition. While urban and well-off students pursue additional learning opportunities through private tutoring, rural students lack additional academic support to overcome school and home-level inadequacies. Private tuition thus becomes an instrument to perpetuate the locational disparities in educational attainment.
- 13 There are several reasons behind the higher prevalence of private tuition in urban areas compared to rural areas in most states. Firstly, parents in urban areas are relatively

better off educationally and economically and are in a position to afford the cost of private tuition. Secondly, there is more competition in urban areas, of which the parents are aware. There are also tremendous peer-group pressures and a sense of guilt among middle-class parents in terms of neglecting their children, besides issues of social obsession and prestige. Parents also feel safe leaving their children in private tuition centers, where they will not waste their time watching television and idling at home. The phenomenon of the nuclear family and double incomes has given couples the requisite money to spare in sending their children to tuition centers. Further, in urban areas there is a greater supply of private tuition, which creates a demand. It also raises an important question about quality of education even in urban schools. In rural areas lack of economic ability, low levels of parental education and aspirations, and limited supply of private tuition can be some of the reasons for the low proportion of private tuition in such areas. Kerala, where rural and urban areas are in continuum and have similar levels of social development, shows no geographical disparities in obtaining private tutoring.

Private tuition in different management-type schools

- 14 There are different management-type schools in India. On the basis of administration, finance and overall control, schools are divided into three types namely government, private aided (privately managed but government-funded), and private unaided. There is a perceptible difference between schools regarding quality, efficiency, and clientele. This variation is also reflected in the percentage of students from different management-type schools seeking private tuition at secondary level. Surprisingly, the highest percentage of students attending private tuition was found in private unaided schools, compared to government and private aided schools (Table 3). At secondary level 65.72% of students in private unaided schools go for private tuition as against 55.06% in private aided and 41.47% in government schools.

Table 3: Extent of private tutoring among different management-type schools (%)

	Secondary		
States	Government	Private aided	Private unaided
Andhra Pradesh	26.7	51	50
Kerala	67.4	61	93.5
Maharashtra	32.6	63.3	74.1
Uttar Pradesh	42.4	37	57
Total	41.47	55.06	65.72

- 15 A similar pattern was found among all four sampled states. The percentage of students going for private tuition was the lowest among government schools, though this varies among the sampled states. While in Kerala and Uttar Pradesh there is marginal difference between government and private aided schools in the extent of private tuition, its

quantum is much higher in private unaided schools. In Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh the extent of private tuition is lowest in government schools compared to the other two management categories of schools. Among the four sampled states, at secondary level the percentage of students going for private tutoring from private unaided schools ranges from a high of 93.5% to a low of 50%, in Kerala and Andhra Pradesh respectively. Among the government schools Andhra Pradesh has the lowest percentage of students seeking private tuition.

- 16 The reason behind the higher percentage of students seeking private tuition from private unaided schools, including high-performing schools, could be for achieving higher scores in public examinations and to maintain the cutting edge. On the other hand, in the case of government schools, most students obtain tutoring to pass public examinations. Some of the private unaided schools encourage private tuition to ensure that students achieve good ranks to maintain the school's reputation and withstand competition from other private schools. Parents of students at private schools also encourage their wards to receive private tuition in order to obtain a better ranking, largely due to their own insecurity despite the schools providing quality services.
- 17 This trend indicates that irrespective of school quality parents are still not gratified with learning in schools and want more individual attention and tutoring for higher performance.

Gender difference

- 18 When we examine the gender perspective in private tuition, which involves additional expenditure for household, this reveals an interesting scenario. Combined in all the four sampled states, a higher percentage of boys are attending private tutoring than girls, as only 39.58% of girls attend private tuition in comparison to 54.86% of boys, with a 15.28 percentile gender difference.

Table 4: Gender and extent of private tutoring (%)

	Secondary		
States	Boys	Girls	Percentile difference
Andhra Pradesh	39.97	16.55	23.42
Kerala	66.56	72.16	5.6
Maharashtra	62.77	51.10	11.67
Uttar Pradesh	58.25	21.56	36.69
Total	54.86	39.58	15.28

- 19 Among all the sampled states except Kerala, the percentage of boys was found to be higher than that of girls seeking private tutoring at secondary level. In Kerala girls are in a more advantageous position compared to boys as a higher percentage of girls seek

private tutoring. Among the other three states the percentile difference between boys and girls varies from 36.69% in the most backward state of Uttar Pradesh to 11.67% in Maharashtra. Further, when we look at gender and location, it was found that girls in rural areas have less access to private tuition, Helen2014-05-26T15:02:00not only compared to boys but also to urban girls. This trend existed in all states except Kerala. Uttar Pradesh has the lowest percentage of girls attending private tutoring in rural areas, closely followed by Andhra Pradesh. In other words, gender inequity in accessing education is reproduced in private tuition, especially in rural areas and more so in underdeveloped states. Firstly, girls have a disadvantage in reaching the secondary level of education, especially in rural areas, and even if they could reach this level they lack equal opportunity in obtaining additional resources in the form of supplementary tutoring. This shows that despite the increased participation of girls in secondary education in backward states, girls are still discriminated against in terms of educational inputs and investment, viz. private tuition, thus restricting their choices and opportunities.

Intensity and source of private tuition

- 20 Among students availing themselves of private tuition, most receive tutoring in one or more subjects. The intensity of private tuition varies among the four states, as there is variation in the number of students seeking private tuition in terms of the number of subjects (Table 5). More than one third (39%) of secondary students go for private tuition in three subjects; at the same level, more than one fourth of students receive tutoring in all subjects. However, one fifth of students receive tuition for two subjects and only 13.30% of students opt for private tutoring in one subject. In all the states most students go for private tutoring in more than one subject, though the intensity of private tutoring varies among the sampled states.

Table 5: Intensity of private tuition (%)

	Secondary			
States	One subject	Two Subjects	Three Subjects	All subjects
Andhra Pradesh	58.12	36.75	3.42	1.71
Kerala	7.02	12.92	12.36	67.60
Maharashtra	11.98	21.81	55.30	10.90
Uttar Pradesh	7.85	21.01	46.84	24.30
Total	13.30	20.67	39.04	26.99

- 21 The state of Kerala, the with highest frequency of private tutoring, also shows a very high intensity. A majority of students (67%) in this state receive private tuition in all subjects. Similarly, in Maharashtra, a high percentage of students (55.30%) go for private tuition in

three subjects. However, even in the educationally and economically backward state of Uttar Pradesh, a majority of students go for private tuition in more than three subjects.

- 22 When we examined private tuition in different subjects in rural and urban areas, it was found that 94.8% of students go for mathematics tutoring in rural areas as against 88.8% in urban areas. In Uttar Pradesh and Kerala a higher percentage of students seek private tuition in English in rural areas whereas the opposite is true for Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. A higher percentage of students receive private tuition in English in rural India, which can be explained in terms of the high failure rate in English and a lack of subject teachers in rural areas to teach English, coupled with poor standards at lower levels of school education, thereby creating the need for private tutoring to secure pass marks in public examinations.

Time spent on private tuition

- 23 The duration of private tuition reflects the extent of investment by households and the perceived need and importance attached to the intensity of private tuition. Students can either choose private tuition for a full academic session, i.e. teaching for a full academic year, or take short-term tuition from the middle or end sessions (before the examinations).

Table 6: Duration of tuition (%)

Tuition session					
Academic session	Andhra Pradesh	Kerala	Maharashtra	Uttar Pradesh	Total
<i>Beginning(full academic year)</i>	64.96	80.84	79.83	60.39	74.06
<i>Middle</i>	29.91	17.65	17.35	29.63	21.36
<i>Before exam</i>	5.13	1.51	2.82	9.97	4.59

- 24 A high majority of students (74%) joined private tuition from the beginning of the academic session for the whole academic year, while a little over one fifth joined in the middle of the academic session and a small percentage of students joined before the public examinations, with quite a small difference among the sampled states. However, both Maharashtra and Kerala show a higher similarity as most students pursue private tuition from the beginning of the academic session. In Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, a little less than one third of students attend private tuition from the middle of academic year. In Uttar Pradesh nearly 10% of students rush to private tuition just before annual examinations.

Source of private tuition

- 25 A majority of students go to private tutorial/coaching centers, which organize tutoring for public examination. Interestingly, nearly one fifth of students obtain private tuition

from the same teacher who teaches in their school, despite this being banned in many states.

Table 7: Students seeking private tuition from different sources (%)

State	Tutorial/coaching centers	Same school teacher	Home tuition
Andhra Pradesh	36.7	58.1	5.1
Kerala	83.3	13.1	3.7
Maharashtra	82.3	14.5	3.3
Uttar Pradesh	75.7	22.5	1.8
Total	77.1	19.8	3.1

- 26 More than three quarters of students obtained private tuition from coaching/ tutorial centers and about one fifth were receiving private tuition from the same schoolteachers. However, in Andhra Pradesh a majority of students (58.1%) were provided private tutoring by the same schoolteachers. The pattern is different in the other three states, where tutorial/coaching centers dominate in providing private tutoring as they cover more than three quarters of tutees. The foregoing analysis and trends in private tuition demonstrate the pervasive spread of private tutoring at secondary level in India.

Reasons for attending private tuition

- 27 Based on the perspective of students seeking private tuition, the reasons could be classified into three categories namely, academic, personal, and social. Academic reasons include the inability to understand classroom instructions, poor teaching, and to pass examinations. Personal reasons include desire to score a higher percentage of marks, and social reasons comprise parental decision, peer-group pressure, etc. But there is a difference in perspective, as students from government schools seek private tuition mostly to qualify in public examinations, while for most private unaided students it is to score high percentage marks and have the edge over others.

Table 8: Students' reasons for attending tuition (%)

Reasons	Government and government-aided schools*	Private unaided schools
Do not understand teaching at school	27	18
Teachers do not teach well in school	12	7
To pass examinations	43	1

To prepare and get higher marks in examinations	10	40
Parents' decision	7	16
Because friends also go for tuition	11	18
Total	100	100

*Includes government-funded private schools.

- 28 Peer pressure and parental decision also play an important role in students' attending private tutoring, though these reasons are more prevalent among students of private unaided schools. More than one tenth of students in government schools stated that they attend private tuition as teachers do not teach wellHelen2014-05-26T15:38:00. Surprisingly, the same reason was mentioned even by some of the students in private unaided schools too. The reasons mentioned by students from private schools also indicate the differential quality of private schools. However, one fifth of students mentioned that they go for private tutoring because of parental decision.
- 29 A large percentage of students, particularly from government schools, mentioned the fact that they could not understand classroom teaching as a reason for seeking private tuition. Also, the largest number of students who attend private tuition are tutored in mathematics, science and English. This explains the poor handling of these important subjects in schools. Crowded classrooms, lack of subject specialists, teachers teaching more than one subject, loss of school working days, authorized and unauthorized teacher absenteeism, not completing syllabus in time, and lack of school monitoring characterize government schools, as education departments fail to implement policies and follow norms (Sujatha *et al.*, 2006).
- 30 As in many developing countries, public examinations occupy center stage in school education in India. A large percentage of students who join private tuition find it useful to prepare for examinations. Students going to private tuition think that private tutoring is very good and very helpful because students are prepared and taught according to the examination pattern; they know the trends and what could be asked in the examination, and how they should answer. The private tuition institutions have the (so-called) right method of preparing students for examinations and, therefore, they suitably put in the efforts needed for a particular subject. They help the students by providing the required materials, conducting frequent tests, giving feedback and suggesting suitable ways of study to optimize performance in different subjects. Above all, students receive individual attention, which is rare in general, particularly in government schools. Since they pay for private tuition both parents and students lay responsibility with and expect accountability from private tutors/centers for performance in examinations. Although the ideal role of the school is not mere preparation for examinations, there is a need to diagnose the gap between the examination system and curricular load, teaching conditions and pedagogical aspects in schools.

Sociocultural aspects

- 31 There are also many social reasons behind the rise and growth of private tuition. Like in many Asian countries, a culture of comparing and competing with peer group, relatives and kin group, and the social obsession with education, are common social features of middle-class Indian society. For many a middle-class parent, association of their wards in reputed private tutorial/coaching centers is a matter of social prestige that confers a feeling of exclusivity. This trend has become more pervasive with the rise of stocks in information technology the great American dream. The norm of the small family with a double income has resulted in households' capacity and willingness to invest in children's education. Among parents, a growing feeling of inability to academically guide their children, and lack of access to neighborhood community, have also ensured parental preference to send their wards to private tuition centers. The culmination of all these factors, at the social level, will put a lot of pressure on parents and students and put them on edge. So much social pressure has the potential to destroy the normal emotional relationship and become a bane for the family and society. There are no simple solutions for social issues.

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APPENDIXES

Annex 1

Students in private tuition in different subjects according to school management type at secondary level (%)

States	Management	Math	Science	English	Other sub.	M&E	M&S	M&O	S&E	S&O	M&E&S	M&E&S&O
Andhra Pradesh	Government	83.8	87.0	89.0	44.8	68.8	71.4	31.8	80.5	33.8	69.5	39.0
	Aided	94.3	86.8	86.8	69.8	86.8	88.7	52.8	83.0	58.5	88.7	67.9
	Unaided	92.9	88.2	83.5	64.7	84.7	85.9	61.2	82.4	57.6	83.5	60.0
	Total	88.4	87.3	87.0	55.1	76.7	78.8	44.2	81.5	45.2	77.1	50.3
Kerala	Government	99.5	89.2	88.2	76.9	88.2	88.7	76.9	82.3	76.3	82.3	72.6
	Aided	98.1	83.0	94.3	81.1	92.5	82.1	80.2	83.0	78.3	82.1	77.4
	Unaided	96.6	65.5	55.2	34.5	55.2	65.5	31.0	48.3	27.6	48.3	24.1
	Total	98.8	85.0	87.2	74.5	86.6	84.4	73.8	79.4	72.6	79.1	69.8
Maharashtra	Government	95.7	74.3	38.6	14.3	38.6	70.0	12.9	37.1	12.9	37.1	9.8

	Aided	94.5	83.2	77.9	12.0	74.2	81.5	10.6	70.3	10.6	69.6	16.4
	Unaided	100.0	77.4	78.1	22.6	78.1	77.4	22.6	60.3	21.9	60.3	7.1
	Total	95.8	80.9	73.7	14.6	71.5	79.3	13.5	64.5	13.4	64.0	11.0
Uttar Pradesh	Government	78.3	92.6	82.0	39.2	69.3	73.5	24.9	77.8	37.0	73.5	25.0
	Aided	70.0	87.2	84.4	45.6	61.7	65.6	26.7	80.8	43.3	65.6	28.1
	Unaided	100.0	81.5	51.9	18.5	51.9	81.5	18.5	51.9	21.1	81.5	21.1
	Total	72.9	89.4	81.1	40.7	64.6	70.5	25.3	77.4	39.0	70.5	26.2
Total	Government	90.7	86.7	82.5	35.4	66.2	75.9	36.6	69.4	40.0	65.6	36.6
	Aided	87.8	83.3	84.9	49.1	78.8	79.5	42.6	79.3	47.7	76.5	47.5
	Unaided	95.3	79.6	60.7	37.9	67.5	77.6	33.3	60.7	32.1	68.4	28.1
	Total	90.4	84.8	80.4	39.7	74.9	78.3	39.2	75.7	42.6	72.7	39.3

Annex 2

Inter-school variations in accessing private tuition (%)

Frequency of private tuition	Andhra Pradesh	Kerala	Maharashtra	Uttar Pradesh
0 %	2	1	0	0
< 20	9	1	3	4
< 40	0	1	5	3
< 60	1	3	1	4
< 80	-	4	1	2
80 >	-	2	2	0

Annex 3

Parental educational background (%)

Educational level of parents	Students attending private tuition	Students not attending private tuition
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	Father	Mother	Father	Mother
Illiterates	1.04	5.01	7.79	21.2
Literates	0.31	0.58	2.82	2.78
Elementary	9.53	14.22	22.3	26.78
Secondary	37.9	42.71	40.04	30.73
Graduate	31.15	22.9	13.94	5.79
Postgraduate and above	11.57	5.86	5.01	1.4
No response	8.52	8.72	8.11	11.22
Total	100	100	100	100

NOTES

1. Private tuition refers to supplementation of tutoring, covering subjects that are already covered in the school and tutoring provided by entrepreneurs and individuals for profit-making purpose (Bray, 1999).
2. See Annex for sample students by different categories.

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